

## TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION BY USING RECIPROCAL TEACHING APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of using the reciprocal teaching approach in teaching reading comprehension to the second grade (year 11) students of SMA Negeri 2 Lhoksukon. This study employed a true experimental design in which there were two classes as the sample, one as the experimental and the other as the control class. The experimental group was taught by using the reciprocal teaching approach, while the control group was taught by using the teacher centered approach. In collecting the data, a test and a questionnaire were used, and then the collected data were analyzed by using *Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) Version 22*. Before the data were processed into further inferential statistics, the normality and the homogeneity of the data were examined. The results of the normality and homogeneity tests showed that the data were normal (sig. 0.20 and 0.12) and homogeneous (sig. 0.63). Based on the t-index from the analysis, it was found there was a significant difference between both groups as 0.17 is higher than  $\alpha=0.05$ . The findings indicate that the students taught by using the reciprocal teaching approach achieved significantly better scores in reading comprehension than those taught by using the teacher centered approach. Hence, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. Moreover, the result of the data analysis from the questionnaire indicated that almost all the students responded positively towards the use of the reciprocal teaching approach since it effectively improved their reading comprehension skills.

Key Words: *Reciprocal Teaching Approach, Reading Comprehension.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

English is a compulsory subject in Indonesian education that is taught from elementary school up to university level. English as a school subject has four important skills which have to be mastered by students as the objective of teaching and learning. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are the core of the curriculum Depdiknas (2006) and Depdikbud (2007). Students use these skills to communicate with people, obtain and present information, respond to literary texts, and to express themselves creatively. Thus, reading as one of four skills has its own important role in the syllabus specification since reading is a necessary skill that learners need to develop their other language skills and increase their knowledge.

Preliminary research was conducted on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in SMAN 2 Lhoksukon, Aceh Utara. The researcher obtained some data needed from class observations with her target research population. The researcher found that the students encountered some problems in reading comprehension. The problems were in finding the main idea, specific information, word meanings, and references.

In the school based curriculum, the students are expected to be able to comprehend the meaning of written texts in the form of narratives, spoofs, and hortatory exposition texts. Teaching reading comprehension is aimed at helping the students to be able to answer questions about the essential reading skills such as the main idea, specific information, references and word meanings. However, the reality at the school where the researcher conducted the research showed that there were many students who still had low comprehension of reading skills. This was proved by the results of students' minimum standard criteria (KKM) given by the teacher. The students' minimum standard criterion (KKM) was 70. The academic report showed that only 40% of the second grade students gained higher or equal to the minimum criteria. The rest of them got scores under 70. Thus, the students' English competence especially in reading comprehension needed to be improved. For that reason, new techniques are needed to help the development of their reading comprehension.

No matter what type of materials that beginner students are reading, they need systematic help in developing and refining their comprehension skills. Specific action, therefore, needs to be taken in order to solve their problems. In this research, the researcher used the

reciprocal teaching approach as one solution to help the students understand the text. Reciprocal teaching is a reading technique which is taught to promote the teaching process for reading comprehension. A reciprocal approach provides students with four specific reading strategies that are actively and consciously used to support comprehension: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. Palincsar (1991) in Seymour and Osana (2003:327) believes the purpose of reciprocal teaching is to facilitate a group effort between a teacher and her students as well as amongst students in the task of bringing meaning to the text.

This study was intended to find out if there would be any significant differences in reading comprehension scores between students who were taught by using the reciprocal teaching approach and those who were taught by using the teacher-centered approach and to find out the responses of students toward the use of the reciprocal teaching approach in teaching reading comprehension.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading is a skill to comprehend the ideas from a writer or the way a writer communicates with his readers through written words. Reading is one of the most important activities in any language class, both as a source of information and for extending one's knowledge of the language. Richards, Platt and Weber (1994) states that reading is an exercise dominated by the eyes and the brain. It is not just the movement of the eyes over the words. The eyes receive the written messages and the brain then has to work out the significance of these messages. Thus, reading is important for the students in order to find out the information available in a passage.

Reading cannot be separated from comprehension because the purpose of the reading activity is to comprehend what has been read. Reading without understanding is useless. Laila (2009:11) states that comprehension takes place while the person is reading and it needs a set of skills that let him find information and understand it in terms of what is already known. Similarly, Barchers (1998:191) says that comprehension may be regarded as relating relevant aspects of the written language in the case of reading to the intention, knowledge, and expectations we already have in our heads of the world around us. The essence of reading comprehension becomes a primary challenge in

teaching or learning of reading skills. In order to learn or understand the message of the author, the students have to have the ability to comprehend the written text.

Reading will be successful if the students can comprehend the written materials or the text well. Grellet (2010:3) perceives that by reading comprehension, a reader tries to understand a text by extracting the meaning from it as efficiently as possible. This means that what the students do in reading activity is to find the information that is of value from the text. Thus, comprehension always plays an important role in reading, because the primary reason for reading is for the students to understand what they read. As readers, they must comprehend what they read in order for the communication between the writer and his readers to become tangible.

### **Reciprocal Teaching**

The Reciprocal teaching strategy was developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984). Reciprocal teaching is an instructional activity that utilizes four comprehension strategies (predicting, questioning, summarizing, and clarifying) in the form of a dialogue between a teacher and her students regarding segments of a text. Song (1998) as cited in Majeed (2013:904) states that in Palincsar and Brown's (ibid) teaching approach, students were taught four concrete strategies which proved to be effective in enhancing the reading ability of these students.

Palincsar and Brown (ibid) describe a program of instruction shown to be effective in improving children's comprehension monitoring activities. The program targets these four strategies: (1) self-questioning (asking what the main idea is rather than asking detailed questions), (2) summarizing, (3) predicting, and (4) evaluating (identifying and clarifying the meaning of difficult sections of the text). Each of these strategies helps students to construct meaning from the text and to monitor their reading to ensure that they understand what they have read. The basic procedure can be adapted for use with small groups of children from the first grade on up (Mason, 1990:59). Each of the strategies helps students to construct meaning from a text and to monitor their reading to ensure that they do in fact understand what they have read.

The aim of reciprocal teaching is to instruct students with particular strategies that they can apply to new texts. According to Palincsar and Brown (ibid), reciprocal teaching is an instructional approach that can

be best characterized by three main features: (a) the scaffolding and explicit instructions which a teacher uses and which include guided practice and modeling of comprehension-fostering strategies, (b) the four main reading strategies of predicting, generating questions, clarifying, and summarizing, and (c) social interaction which provides opportunities for learners to improve their cognitive, meta-cognitive and affective strategies and offers them chances to share ideas, increase confidence, and learn from their more capable friends. These three features help improve the students' ability to resolve comprehension difficulties, reach a higher level of thinking, build meta-cognition, and increase motivation.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, true experimental design was applied by the researcher. There were two sample classes; an experimental class (EG) and a control class (CG). The experimental class students were taught reading comprehension by the reciprocal teaching approach. Meanwhile, the control class students were taught reading comprehension by using the teacher-centered approach.

### **Analysis of Tests**

To analyze the data, the researcher employed quantitative analysis. The collected data was analyzed by using statistical procedures to identify whether the hypothesis was accepted or rejected. Furthermore, this analysis was conducted to see if the reciprocal teaching approach successfully improved the scores of students in reading comprehension. The data were analyzed statistically (Sudjana, 2002) using the software, *Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) Version 22*. Some steps of statistical procedure were used in order to examine the comparison of the scores from both groups. The process of data analysis for both pre-test and post-test included the normality test, the homogeneity test, and the t-test.

### ***Analysis of Data from the Questionnaire***

The results from the questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed for each question. The analysis was based on the percentage of responses from the students (Brown, 1997:73). To calculate the percentage of frequency of each answer, the researcher used the following formula:

$$p = \frac{f}{n} \times 100\%$$

In which:

P : questionnaire percentage,

F : frequency

N : total number of respondents

## FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the raw scores from the experimental and the control groups.

**Table 1.** Raw scores from the Experimental and the Control Groups.

| No. | Control Group |           | Experimental Group |           |
|-----|---------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
|     | Pre-test      | Post-Test | Pre-test           | Post-Test |
| 1   | 70            | 80        | 60                 | 85        |
| 2   | 45            | 65        | 45                 | 75        |
| 3   | 35            | 75        | 35                 | 70        |
| 4   | 35            | 65        | 70                 | 90        |
| 5   | 50            | 80        | 45                 | 80        |
| 6   | 60            | 85        | 50                 | 75        |
| 7   | 20            | 60        | 65                 | 90        |
| 8   | 40            | 70        | 35                 | 75        |
| 9   | 60            | 70        | 50                 | 70        |
| 10  | 20            | 60        | 60                 | 80        |
| 11  | 60            | 85        | 65                 | 85        |
| 12  | 50            | 70        | 50                 | 75        |
| 13  | 55            | 75        | 70                 | 90        |
| 14  | 45            | 75        | 50                 | 80        |
| 15  | 40            | 60        | 55                 | 80        |
| 16  | 35            | 55        | 65                 | 80        |
| 17  | 60            | 80        | 75                 | 90        |
| 18  | 60            | 80        | 70                 | 90        |
| 19  | 35            | 55        | 40                 | 65        |
| 20  | 45            | 70        | 65                 | 80        |
| 21  | 55            | 75        | 70                 | 95        |
| 22  | 65            | 85        | 55                 | 75        |
| 23  | 35            | 60        | 40                 | 65        |
| 24  |               |           | 55                 | 70        |
| 25  |               |           | 75                 | 90        |

The normality test results from both the experimental and the control groups are set out in Table 2.

**Table2.** Normality Test for both the Experimental and Control Groups.

| Class   |    | Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup> |    |                   | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|---------|----|---------------------------------|----|-------------------|--------------|----|------|
|         |    | Statistic                       | Df | Sig.              | Statistic    | df | Sig. |
| Pretest | CG | .138                            | 23 | .200 <sup>*</sup> | .946         | 23 | .244 |
|         | EG | .153                            | 25 | .137              | .943         | 25 | .177 |

The results from the Homogeneity Test between the pre-test data of both the experimental and the control groups are as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Homogeneity Test of both the Experimental and Control Groups.

| Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| .225             | 1   | 46  | .637 |

The hypothesis which needs to be tested as mentioned earlier is as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference in reading comprehension scores between the students who were taught by using the reciprocal teaching approach and those who were taught by using the teacher-centered approach.

H<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant difference in reading comprehension scores between the students who were taught by using the reciprocal teaching approach and those who were taught by using the teacher-centered approach.

Table 4 displays the statistics of the EG Pre-test and the CG Pre-test (Test 1).

**Table 4.** Statistics of the EG Pre-test and the CG Pre-test.

| No.         | Mean  | SD    | Variance | t-value | t-value significance |
|-------------|-------|-------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| Pre-test CG | 46.73 | 13.70 | 187.69   | 2.62    | 0.01                 |
| Pre-test EG | 56.60 | 12.30 | 151.29   |         |                      |

Table 5 displays the statistics of the EG Pre-test and the EG Post-test (Test 2).

**Table 5.** Statistics of the EG Pre-test and the EG Post-test.

| No.         | Mean  | SD    | Variance | t-value | t-value significance |
|-------------|-------|-------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| Pre-test EG | 56.60 | 12.30 | 151.29   | 1.02    | 0.13                 |

Table 6 displays the statistics of the CG Pre-test and the CG Post-test (Test 3).

**Table 6.** Statistics of the CG Pre-test and the CG Post-test.

| No.         | Mean  | SD    | Variance | t-value | t-value significance |
|-------------|-------|-------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| Pre-test CG | 46.73 | 13.70 | 187.69   | -2.84   | 0.007                |

Table 7 displays the statistics of the EG Post-test and the CG Post-test (Test 4).

**Table 7.** Statistics of the EG Post-test and the CG Post-test.

| No.          | Mean  | SD   | Variance | t-value | t-value significance |
|--------------|-------|------|----------|---------|----------------------|
| Post-test CG | 71.08 | 9.64 | 92.92    | 3.39    | 0.17                 |
| Post-test EG | 80    | 8.53 | 72.76    |         |                      |

In the process of data collection on students' responses toward the use of reciprocal teaching approach in teaching reading comprehension, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the twenty five students in the experimental class. The questionnaire was aimed at getting the opinions or attitudes of the students, whether they felt positive toward the reciprocal teaching for reading comprehension or not. The questions were marked by the students using a Likert's scale (Sudjana, 1998) as follows:

**Table 8.** Likert's Scale (Sudjana, 1998).

| No. | Items             | Symbol |
|-----|-------------------|--------|
| 1   | Strongly Agree    | SA     |
| 2   | Agree             | A      |
| 3   | Strongly Disagree | SD     |
| 4   | Disagree          | D      |

Generally, the entire criterion of the students' responses was positive and their reading improved significantly.



## **DISCUSSIONS**

The first discussion deals with the improvement resulted after using the reciprocal teaching approach in teaching reading comprehension. After processing the data by using *SPSS version 22* (2014), it was revealed that the distribution of the experimental and control groups' scores on the pre-test was normal and the variance value for the two groups was also homogeneous.

For hypothesis testing, it can be concluded that in Test 1, the significant t-value was 0.01. As this was less than 0.05, this means that  $H_0$  was accepted and  $H_a$  was rejected. So, there was no significant difference from this test. In addition, the t-value for this test was 2.62. In Test 2, the significant t-value was 0.13. As this was higher than 0.05, this means that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. So, there was a significant difference from this test. In addition, the t-value for this test was 1.02.

In Test 3, the significant t-value was 0.007. As this was less than 0.05, this means that  $H_0$  was accepted and  $H_a$  was rejected. So, there was no significant difference found from this test. Moreover, the t-value for this test was -2.84.

In Test 4, the significant t-value was 0.17. As this was higher than 0.05, this means that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. So, there was a significant difference found from this test. Moreover, the t-value for this test was 3.39.

Test 4 was used to prove the hypothesis of this study. Because  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference in the reading comprehension scores between the students who were taught by using the reciprocal teaching approach and those who were not.

This was a significant indicator that showed that the experiment had improved the second year students' achievement in reading comprehension. Using the reciprocal teaching approach for teaching reading comprehension is more fruitful than teaching it through the teacher-centered approach. This is due to the following reasons: firstly, reciprocal teaching encourages students to think about their own thoughts through the process during reading. Secondly, it helps students learn to be actively involved and monitor their comprehension as they read. Thirdly, it teaches students to ask questions during reading and helps them comprehend the text better.

The second discussion is on the questionnaire filled in by the students from the experimental group in the last meeting. It can be concluded that the students reacted positively to the strategy applied in their reading class. It was interesting that the majority of the students gave positive responses toward the use of the reciprocal teaching approach for teaching reading comprehension. The students agreed that the reciprocal teaching approach could improve their English learning. It motivated them in studying and in the discussion process because the reciprocal teaching approach enabled the students to make their own interpretation of the text. The teacher found that the reciprocal teaching approach made it easier for the students to generate questions and answers to discuss with their group. It also eased them to communicate with their friends as noted by Cook (2001:152), group work in reciprocal teaching can alternately teach each other. This is supported by the findings of Gay (2005). He said that since reciprocal teaching is carried out through small group discussion, this lets students approach reading in a more motivated way.

Based on the findings of this study, the reciprocal teaching approach successfully improved the reading comprehension ability of students and also enhanced their scores. Furthermore the reciprocal teaching approach had a significantly positive effect on their English reading comprehension. The students learn to use four strategies such as learning to predict, to generate questions, to identify the main idea of a paragraph, to clarify unclear words, phrases, or sentences, and to summarize their reading. These four key strategies helped the students overcome difficulties when reading texts as they planned and monitored their comprehension, and evaluated their planning and its outcome. For these reason, it can be concluded that the reciprocal teaching approach is a kind of reading instruction that facilitates the teaching of English reading comprehension.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The researcher found that the students who were taught reading comprehension using the reciprocal teaching approach got better results. This was proven by the differences between the mean scores from the pre-tests and the post-tests of both the experimental and the control groups.

Furthermore, these students had positive reactions toward this approach. The findings of the questionnaire revealed that these students

were able to acquire reading strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. Therefore, the students agreed that the reciprocal teaching approach helped and motivated them in comprehending the texts.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

According to the research findings, it was found that the reciprocal teaching approach can be an alternative technique in improving reading comprehension ability of students. Of course, support from their teacher, motivation, and the way of explaining the teaching materials are other important aspects that must be provided. The researcher therefore would like to propose some suggestions for English teachers and for other researchers.

In order to create a good way to teach the students, the first thing that teachers have to do is they should find a way to teach reading which can motivate students to read. Second, in finding appropriate ways, teachers should analyze the students' needs and know the students' difficulties while working in groups. The teachers should not dominate the classroom. They have to give the students opportunities to express their opinions. Lastly, the teachers also should always remember that class management is an important aspect in delivering a successful teaching and learning process.

Meanwhile, for other researchers who are interested in conducting similar research, it is suggested that they use other genres of text since there are many genres of text that can be learned by the students as provided for in the curriculum. Moreover, it is expected that this study can be used as a reference for further studies of different needs. Finally, for other researchers, it is also expected that this study can become one of their foundations for conducting their research toward other subjects and skills using this technique.

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